

A SONG *of* SICILY

AND OTHER VERSES

LOUISE KOBBE FARNUM



Class PS3511

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and other verses



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their pages.*

TO THE MEMORY OF MY FATHER
THIS BOOK
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

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PART I.

A SONG OF SICILY
AND OTHER VERSES

TO MY MOTHER

*I would not even dare to try
To be like you;
The restless sea can never catch
The rainbow hue.*

*Serene and patiently you've gone
Your faultless way,
While I have taken Life as one
Long holiday.*

*The gentle workings of your heart
Have done no wrong,
And so it is to you I bring
My gift of song.*

A SONG OF SICILY

Has thy fair muse forsaken thee,
O poet of the auburn hair?
And painter, in thy model fair
Hast thou discovered treachery?
Have flowers fled before their day
And summer's skies been dimmed too soon?
Does darkness come before the noon?
Have friends and lovers passed away?
Then come, and I will show to thee
The rock-bound coast of Sicily.

Her charm-enchanted air is sweet
And breathes of happier days to be—
For hungry souls, felicity;
For poets, sonnets fair to greet:
And painter, by her azure skies
Reflected in the water's blue,
To thee the gods bequeath the true
Untarnished fame that never dies:—
O jewel of the Aegean sea!
O rock-bound coast of Sicily!

—TAORMINA, 1908.

SHE GAVE HER SOUL FOR THEM

Why do you envy her, passing fair,
Whose love is but stratagem?
The sparkling jewels in all her hair?
She gave her soul for them.

Her gown is costly and 'broidered in gold,
And rubies gleam in the hem;
(Her face is young but her heart is old)
She gave her soul for them.

The sleeves of her robe are wonderful things:
Do you notice that glittering gem?
Her bracelets, too, and her finger rings?
She gave her soul for them.

Do you think that her poor heart never demurs
At the pearls in her diadem?
She'd give them all for that soul of yours—
Who gave her soul for them.

O, I HAVE DREAMS

O, I have dreams that never shall come true:
So they shall never die,
And through the world we'll wander, hand in hand,
My dreams and I.

And I have songs that never shall be sung:
So they shall live always,
And shed their warmth, their beauty, and their love
Through all my days.

And I have thoughts of something far beyond:
Thoughts that shall not be said;
But they will bring the flowers to my grave
When I am dead.

TO AN OLD PICTURE

A powdered wig, a painted face:
What constant heart could e'er forget
The measure of the minuet,
Sweet lavender and filmy lace?

O many-colored butterflies,
And sun, far flashing o'er the grass;
Eternal love is born to pass,
But fettered yearning never dies.

Step down from out thy frame, and let
Thy sweet emerging loveliness
Upon a care-worn age impress
The beauty of the minuet.

I KNOW THAT LIFE ABOUNDS IN
SUCH DELIGHT

I know that life abounds in such delight
That could I grasp it all,
And reach the dizzy summit of its height,
My weary steps would fall.

I know that life is filled with fretfulness,
And I shall ask no more
Than scattered moments of forgetfulness;
A lover at the door.

THE BIRD-MAN

He fashioned of his brain a wondrous thing,
Delightfully enchanting, graceful, fair;
And rising with the presence of a king,
Laughed at the air.

An unforboded wind came hurrying by,
And in its wake a spectral phantom grim,
That hurled him from the interminable sky
And laughed at him.

AMOR VITAE

In little children's faces,
In age worn out with care;
In silent cloistered places,
The Love of Life is there.

It braces the foundations
Of all the loves that bloom,
Puts strength into the nations
And flowers on the tomb.

THE LONG ROAD

The road was long and weary,
But wound toward the South,
For you had smiled above me
And leaned to kiss my mouth.

But now the clouds have gathered
To hide the sun again,
And all that April sunshine
Has turned to April rain.

When you are long forgotten,
I shall remember you,
And walking down the long road,
Will dream the skies are blue.

S O N G

Afternoon forgets the morning;
Night, the garish day;
Larks proclaim the summer's dawning,
Then they fly away.

Fleet is life, and love is fleeter,
Living but an hour;
And they say the sun is sweeter
For a troubled shower.

THE CALL OF THE SEA

The wind is roaring o'er the sea;
Its deep-toned cadence calls to me
Beseechingly.

The lingering breeze caresses me
And lures me toward the purple lea
Appealingly.

A child's head leans against my knee:
I turn my back upon the sea
Reluctantly.

THE BEGGAR MAN

To-day I saw a beggar-man,
And would have passed him by
But that I turned to look around
And chanced to catch his eye.

It may have been a foolish thing—
He must have wondered, too—
That I should give him all I had,
But O, his eyes were blue!

HEART OF THE HELIOTROPE

Heart of the heliotrope,
Foam-flower of the sea,
Hush of the early dawn,
Bring my love to me.

Peace of the morning star
Shining there above,
Heart of the heliotrope,
Take me to my love.

I ALWAYS KNEW

I always knew
 That you loved me,
Just as I know you always knew
That I loved you.

Death may have set you free
Of love and me,
 But I will love you through
Eternity.

EMBERS

If it were not for the embers still glowing in my
heart
(Embers of a love that will not burn itself out),

If there did not lie buried deep within me
The still warm glow of an unforgotten love,

I could not face the silences of life
And its awful peace.

MY PARAMOUR

I have ta'en the red wine to be my paramour—
 Woody and won the crimson of the sweet delirious
 grape;
Without alluring love words or blushing metaphor,
 I caught and held her to me and defied her to escape.

Now she is my mistress and she holds me in her sway,
 And I must fain obey her and comply without
 demur;
And if beyond her sorceries I chance perhaps to stray,
 She storms and rages, fumes and frets, and calls
 me back to her.

A SONG OF LIFE

Life seemed a song:
A song whose melody was passing sweet
With merry music for my dancing feet;
 Yet all along
I knew the hunger of a heart within
And heard strings breaking on Life's violin.

LONG AGO

Long ago I knew a man who was very sick in a
hospital,
And from his window I could see some ash cans,
Three in a row.

He used to tell me of all the things he did when
he was a boy,
And sometimes I would tell him what I saw from
his window.

One day an old man picked some faded flowers
out of one of the ash cans,
And I remembered that, once upon a time, he must
have been a boy too.
But I didn't say anything about it, because the man
that I knew was very sick.

So I told him I had just seen a new Packard car
go by.

But he is dead now, and it was a long time ago.

THE CONVENT

Can such a thing stand in a Christian age?

Tear down the wall that guards its living dead!

Our Lord himself was slain: for us the wage

Of sin is not to die, but live instead.

WHEN I AM UNDERGROUND

When I am underground,
I wonder if the bees
Will still be humming through the grass
Their tuneful melodies.

I wonder if the rain
Will have that dripping sound
At night, upon my window-sill,
When I am underground.

I wonder if the leaves
Will turn to red and gold,
And if the frost will come again
Before the year is old.

When I am underground
And of the earth a part,
I wonder if your love will still
Be tugging at my heart.

LONG YEARS AGO

I understood the whisperings of the breeze
Long years ago in childhood's sunny hours;
I talked with birds, and communed with the flowers,
And often heard strange voices in the trees.

Dear childhood days, you were so quickly gone.
In vain I pleaded: greedily you took
My water-nymphs who played beside the brook,
And stole the fairies from my velvet lawn.

EVENING

Another day
Has passed away
And shed its light,

And over all
There spreads the pall
Of sable night.

I'd like to sail
A moonbeam pale
To some far place

Where I could let
Myself forget
Your starlit face;

Where all the love
And pain thereof
That I have known

Would let me rest
On heaven's breast
Against your own.

THE HYACINTH

As I wandered through the glory
Of my garden's labyrinth,
I selected from its beauty,
A modest hyacinth.

Sceptic, unbeliever I!
Yet I questioned not the story
Dumbly told me in my garden
As I wandered through its glory.

THE GIPSY TO HIS LOVE

I will bring you bracelets, beads and finger-rings,
And a ribbon for your ebon hair, if you'll give me
your heart;

I will be your true love, your love who ever sings
Of that eternal, roaming, wandering, roving gipsy
art.

I will bring you garlands, and sprays of asphodel,
And tufts of clustering clematis, dew-kissed from
heaven above;

I'll fashion potent love-charms from a glowing aludel
That all may worship at your shrine, if you will be
my love.

I will bring the west wind and tame it to your mood,
And leave it mild and tractable to be your castel-
lain;

And you shall be the deity of our wild brotherhood,
And reign supreme and powerful o'er all our vast
domain.

L I N E S

I did not begin to live
Until sorrow had struck me dumb.
I never laughed or sang
Until I had reached the utmost depths of despair.
I could not lend a helping hand
Until I, myself, was beyond the help of others.
And when I saw the frenzied youth of nations
Killing each other,
I knew there was peace in the world.

TO MY VALENTINE

If you will be my Valentine
And come with me to-day,
I will lead you along a rainbow path
To the banks of the Far Away.

I will feed you with honey that drips from the stars
When the moon begins to rise,
And give you to drink from a crystal bowl
As clear as the light in your eyes.

I will sing you the song of the Purple Sea
And hold your hand in mine,
And when you are weary I'll let you go,
If you'll be my Valentine.

BERMUDA

A sky more fair than any gift of love,
A sea more green than emeralds in the sun;
And fields of Easter lilies, overrun
With perfume that the gods have wearied of.

Rocks, where the breakers run to kiss the shore,
Foam, that the sea-birds scatter in their flight,
As with the feet of love, soft comes the night
And gathers to her breast your madrepora.

“QUASI CURSORES VITAE
LAMPADA TRADUNT”

I am in love with love, and not with you.
You carry in your hands a lamp—my life:
And you tend well the lamp,
And keep it filled with oil—your love;
But should the flame burn low,
Then you must toss
The lamp to one who shall replenish it.

I am in love with love, and not with you.
You are the mirror of my wonderland,
The mountain pool reflecting all my moods,
The somnolent medium 'twixt love and me:
But mirrors age and crack from side to side,
And mountain pools are ruffled by the breeze,
And mediums cannot always hold the trance.

I shall but sigh when all your flame is spent,
For there are others who can bear my lamp.
I am in love with love, and not with you.

PART II.

LOVE SONGS

FOR PIERROT

*Unless I came and told you so,
I wonder whether you would know
These songs are not for you, Pierrot.*

*For some were written long ago,
And others yesterday; but O,
They're none of them for you, Pierrot.*

*I've never sung to you, although
I could not sing at all, I know,
If it were not for you, Pierrot.*

M A D N E S S

Why is it that when I would laugh
 I see your sad eyes over there?
When I would weep, I see your smile,
 A suppliant prayer!

I taste you in the wine I drink,
 And when I would rejoice,
The restless waves that beat the shore
 Call to me with your voice.

I have a poet's singing heart,
 And yet I cannot sing:
I am a bird that tries to fly
 And has a broken wing.

AFTERGLOW

Hast thou forgotten, dear, those wonder-nights
Whose memory lies deep-mirrored in my soul;
How, creeping silver-sandaled from the heights,
Dear darkness veiled us in her sable stole?

O sweet impassioned boy! O heaven-lent hours!
Within the enchantment of thine afterglow
Pale yearning disappeared, as perfumed showers
Fade at the crimson blush of a rainbow.

I D O L

The idol that I worship
Is not a god of stone,
He does not sit before me
Upon an idol-throne:

I do not lie prostrated
To kiss his mantle-hem,
Nor sprinkle with frankincense
His jewelled diadem:

He is no graven image
To whom I bend the knee—
This idol that I worship,
Made for idolatry.

THREE DAYS

Three days we spent together—snatched from time—
Three little days to help us on Life's road;
To ease the burden and make light the load
That mortals carry as they onward climb.

Those dear, sweet days may never come again;
They were too perfect not to want to die:
The world went on the same, but you and I,
We saw the sunlight shining through the rain!

MY MEMORY

I am the master of my memory,
And do not heed it when it strives to be
 Master of me.

For I have made it change its grim attire,
And moulded all the image of its ire
 To my desire.

And I shall turn its mourning into song
And all its sense of injury and wrong
 To peace, ere long.

AND THEN I WAKE

I dream sometimes that you and I
Are by the sea,
And that you take my hand and turn
To look at me.

Sometimes you hold me in your arms
And draw me near,
And then—ah! then I wake and find
The dawn is here.

D U S K

I do not fear the moon-charmed night,
Nor yet the sun-bathed day—
'Tis in the weirdly gathering dusk
You seem so far away.

But sometimes through the silent courts
Hope, reassuring, gleams,
And then I'm happy, for I know
I'll find you in my dreams.

I DREAM OF YOU

I dream of you in the earliest morn,
 When pain and sorrow sleep;
I dream of you in the pearliest dawn
 'Till I forget to weep:
'Till the rising sun, like a ball of gold,
 Steals all my dreams from me,
And the stars retreat lest they may behold
 My waking misery.

If ever the sun forget to rise
 To lure me from my rest—
From visions of love and your starlit eyes
 As you hold me to your breast—
If ever the night forget to run
 To meet the shining day,
I'll gather my dreams up, every one,
 And gently steal away.

BECAUSE I WOULD NOT TAKE YOUR HAND

Because I would not take your hand
You thought I did not understand.

The fields were carpeted with dew,
Above my head the heavens were blue;

Beyond, I saw a bubbling spring,
And little birds were carolling.

The sun had kissed the pregnant trees,
And summer's breath was in the breeze;

And then as far as I could see
Stretched violets to eternity.

But since I did not take your hand
You thought I could not understand.

T W I L I G H T

Twilight, and the day is ending,
Bringing joy to me;
Twilight, and the gods are sending
Sweet felicity.
Twilight, and the heart unfolding
Knows no grace like this;
Twilight, and the eyes beholding
Close before your kiss.
Twilight—through its mystic mazes
You have come to me!
Twilight! Twilight! sing its praises
Through eternity!

THERE ARE LOVERS

There are lovers one, two, three,
Waiting at the gate for me.

Underneath my silken spread
I lie dreaming on my bed—

Dreaming what could never be
With my lovers one, two, three.

Since they love me they can wait
There beside my garden gate;

And perhaps they'll weary of
Me, who am afraid of love.

THOSE HOURS WE SPENT TOGETHER

Those hours we spent together
I've woven into rhyme
And hidden in my heart-beats
Against the test of time.

I've fashioned of my longing
A melody so true,
That April's ceased her weeping,
And all the skies are blue.

So I shall smile at sorrow,
And I shall laugh at pain,
For you're the tune, belovèd,
And love is the refrain.

A MEMORY

I never let
Myself forget
That memory sweet-scented—miles of trees,
And fields aflame
With scarlet and with gold—your name,
And all the fragrance of a June-time breeze:
Hills that spread out with tenderness beyond
A lovely pond
All irised in the meadow where it lay,
And far away.

They tell me there is bitterness in love;
That with it wanders sorrow, hand in hand:
But I have never known one whit thereof,
And people laugh who do not understand.

I'VE BROUGHT YOU FLOWERS

I've brought you flowers fresh-plucked from the
grass—

Geraniums, myrtle and hollyhocks,
Rose-mallow sweet, and the fragrant phlox
That used to nod when it saw us pass.

I've filled to the brim your crystal bowl
With the bubbling wine that you love to drink;
Yet my place is alone on the river's brink,
And the white sea-gull is my wandering soul.

LITANY

Whatever God's in Heaven,
Then harken to my prayer:
"I thank Thee for my two round breasts
And for my golden hair.

I thank Thee for the roses
That make my cheeks' delight,
I thank Thee for my eyes of brown
And for the summer night.

I thank Thee for the lover
Thou givest me for love,
I thank Thee for the quiet dark
And for the stars above.

And when the summer's faded
And autumn breezes blow,
I'll thank Thee that the winter wheat
Stays green beneath the snow."

WE'VE REACHED THE CROSS-ROADS

We've reached the cross-roads, you and I;
Our lovely hours are well-nigh spent—
For we must bury love, earth-born,
Though heaven-sent.

So strange and sad the road for you
That winds toward love's counterpart;
For me the hill-tops that shall hide
My homeless heart.

WEARINESS

O, Love found me tired
And kissed away my tears—
Kissed them softly, gently—
And he laughed at all my fears.

Love has left me tired—
Tired—but very fair—
I am weary—weary—
But there's gold dust in my hair!

HOLY WEEK

They say no prayers for me;
Yet I have prayed
Unceasingly, above that mossy bank
Where Love was laid.

They shed no tears for me;
Yet I have wept,
While all the world in silent slumber lay,
And angels slept.

They sing no hymns for me;
Yet I have died
A thousand times upon the cross
Since Christ was crucified.

WHEN YOU COME BACK TO ME

When you come back to me,
We'll gather all the foam-flowers of the sea
And weave them into garlands for my hair:
And we will spread
A coverlet of Spring upon your head,
And laugh at care.

We'll shake the apple-blossoms from the trees,
And catch the breeze
Whose perfumed breath the sun has softly kissed;
And through our fingers we will let it run
'Till one by one
The stars come twinkling through their heaven-mist.

And from the purple grandeur of the sea
The moon will rise again for you and me.

I DREAMED OF YOU LAST NIGHT

I dreamed of you last night, and then I woke
And thought you near;
I thought I heard you breathing in the dark,
And touched your ear.
Your face was turned away from me,
And through your hair
I ran my fingers gently, for I thought
That you were there.

“But Paris was happy, for he knew that what he loved most in the universe was his very own, and that no one could ever take it away from him.”

Come to me with the love you used to bring
When birds were caroling
Sweet songs of Spring;
And lay your weary head upon my breast
And gently rest
Your tired, troubled mind, dear heart, and fling
Your own two arms about my neck, and sing
A little of the wondrous yesterday—
And then—and only then dear, steal away—!

IN THE SOUTH

I had a longing for the South,
 To run away from love and you;
But here the sea is over-green,
 The sky too blue.

I ran away to meet the Spring,
 To stand and face it all alone;
And still I seem to find you in
 Each overtone.

From love and you I ran away
 Lest Spring should catch me unaware;
But every flower is mocking me—
 Love was so fair!

SINCE I HAVE WEPT

When I could laugh I never knew
What love might do to me,
Because there always was some note
That spoiled the melody.

Since I have wept for love of you,
I know that love affords
A something far beyond the reach
Of all love's faultless chords.

IF YOU WOULD WORSHIP BEAUTY

If you would worship Beauty,
 Leave your play
And follow where I lead you,
 Far away.

If you would worship Beauty,
 Come with me
Beyond the utmost limits
 Of the sea.

If you would worship Beauty,
 Take my hand
And I will lead you gently
 To the Promised Land.

CONTRADICTION

O, I shall never quite forget
Who dimmed the glory of my smile
And robbed me of my faith—and yet
I'll love him all the while.

O, I shall never quite forgive
The strange futility of tears
That solace not—yet while I live,
I'll love him through the years.

S O N G

Life is so short,
Death is so long,
Youth is so fair,
Love is so strong—

Living is suffering,
Loving is rest;
Lie with your head
Close to my breast.

LIGHT LOVE

Love lightly, like a bee that sips
The heart's blood from a dew-drenched rose,
Then flies to where the lily grows
To lie against her lips.

Love lightly, unafraid of love
And free and careless as a bird;
Let fall no sigh or song or word
To be regretful of.

Love lightly, like a sail at sea
That runs and dances in the breeze,
Love when and where and whom you please—
But speak no love to me.

DO YOU EVER THINK OF ME?

Do you ever think of me
When the thrush is on the tree,
And the breath of summer's dancing in the grasses?
It is then I think of you
When the mountain's wet with dew
And the wild flowers carpet all the woodland passes.

Do you ever think of me
When you gaze upon the sea
As we used to gaze together, hand in hand?
O, I always think of you
When the waves are dancing blue
And the foam-flowers wander in to kiss the sand.

Do you ever think of me
In this sad Gethsemane
That has bound me in with hedge of cruel thorn?
I shall always think of you
When the morning's violet hue
Breaks and tells me that another day is born.

AN AGE AGO

Is it a year, or is it a day—
Is it an age or an hour?
What were the words I heard you say
There in our sun-kissed bower?

You were a boy and I was a girl
And life and love were in tune,
The world seemed all of mother-of-pearl
Under the harvest moon.

I was a girl and you were a boy,
And 'twas surely an age ago,
For that golden land of our childhood's joy
Lies covered with frozen snow.

YOU GAVE ME LOVE

You gave me love—immortal love—
Entrusted to my care
A joy intemperate and keen
As days of June are fair.

I gave you love—a love as vague
As tangled memories,
Elusive as the bits of foam
Tossed by a summer breeze.

I cherish still the glorious gift
That you have made to me,
And welcome through the silences
Its immortality.

But marvel, for you never knew
The love I might have given you!

SINCE I HAVE SUNG LIKE SAPPHO

Since I have sung like Sappho
And loved like Guenevere,
I tread the far horizon
And step from sphere to sphere.

On golden wings of morning
I mount into the sky,
And rest upon a moon-beam
To watch the clouds roll by.

The foam-flowers on the ocean
I waken with a kiss
From lips forever silent
And cold as Beatrice!

PART III.

SONGS FOR PEOPLE

SPRINGTIME

FOR P. E. F.

There is a sound of music in the air,
And violins are singing through the night;
It is the Springtime of my life, and there
Is song and laughter for my soul's delight.

Life fastens in my hair a love-drenched rose
And blows me kisses with the breath of Spring,
And in the garden where the poppy grows
I hear the little wood larks caroling.

Ah, do not slay the rapture in my breast
Nor deem that Summer is approaching yet,
For here and there I see a robin's nest,
And yesterday I found a violet.

There is a silence that is born of love,
There is a sweetness clinging to its lips;
And all too soon the nights are wearied of,
And all too soon the harbor finds her ships.

And when the sweet autumnal days are here
I'll come and hold you always by the hand,
And when your smile meets mine, to find me near,
I'll love you more, that you could understand.

S O N G

FOR E. L. S.

I've made you laugh and I've made you cry,
And you've done the same to me;
We have watched the silent ships go by
Over the purple sea.

Together we'll wander, hand in hand,
Ever, the whole world through,
For we are young and we understand,
And I've written this song for you.

TO MARTHA

Violets for your eyes, love,
Roses for your lips;
Smiles of glad surprise, love,
Never tears or sighs, love,
Cheeks like evening skies, love,
When the red sun dips
Back of hill and mountain,
Lighting rill and fountain:
In the glad sunshine we love,
Crimson of the wine we love
Has no hue like thine, my love.

TO THE BROTHERS GRIMM

(FOR GEORGE CURTIS RAND)

I love the king who lived in days when wishing was
some good,
When dragons for their food preferred princesses of
the blood,
When fishes, birds and animals were princes under
spell,
And Fundevogel very nearly ended in the well.

Enchanted then (enchanting now), fair maidens
danced till one,
And Cinderella married well, the rich king's youngest
son;
Her ugly sisters cut their toes to give the shoe a
chance,
But dripping blood cannot be hid from love's discern-
ing glance.

I love the innocent delight of sweet Red Riding-Hood,
Who met the gay deceiving wolf way off within a
wood;
Dear favored child, you were in luck, to-day quite
out of date,
For who so hungry that he quite forgets to masticate?

I love the Robber Bridegroom who wooed, won, but
 didn't wed,
Who for his past discrepancies was forced to give his
 head;
Seized by the guests and handed o'er at his own
 wedding-feast,
And executed where he stood, is quaint, to say the
 least.

But you are right, dear Brothers Grimm, you keep the
 world in rhyme:
Your fairy stories call to me across the sands of time;
For witches, ghosts and hobgoblins relieve an old-time
 pain,
And as I read you I become a little child again.

I'VE GATHERED VIOLETS TO
MATCH YOUR EYES
(FOR SISTER RAND)

I've gathered violets to match your eyes,
And golden-rod the color of your hair;
And for your cheeks two roses, sweet; but there—
How foolish of me not to recognize
That when I brought them near you they would seem
But shadows of what I had thought they were.
God could not match the color of your hair
In any flower of his, or in a dream:
And yet did I, with simple eagerness,
Compare them to your perfect loveliness!

BECAUSE YOU ARE MY FRIEND

FOR M. B. V.

Because you are my friend, the longest day
Seems just a trifle shorter than it is,
And somehow all my labor turns to play
If I but pause awhile and think of this;
Because you are my friend.

Because you are my friend, there is no need
To beat my wings against the running tide:
I ask nor fame, nor wealth—my only creed
Is love, and mine is ever at your side;
Because you are my friend.

Because you are my friend, I often smile
When tears of pity should be in mine eyes;
And sometimes in my heart I laugh, the while
Men tell me all of love's strange mysteries;
Because you are my friend.

IF I WERE YOUNG AS YOU

If you were old as I am
And I were young as you,
And youth were fair as you are,
I know what I should do.

I'd understand the meaning
Of life, and death, and love,
And all the ancient riddles
The world has wearied of.

I'd tame the swinging seasons
And bind them to the moon,
And calm the restive elements
Till it were always June.

I'd solve the Sphinx eternal
And cast it to the sky,
If I were young as you are
And you were old as I.

—BERMUDA, 1920.

EMANCIPATION

FOR A. W. S.

(Los Angeles, California, November 27th, 1920)

Thrown off the shackles binding thee to earth,
Broken the web that spread 'twixt life and thee;
Severed the links that barred thy second birth,
Torn from thy face the veil Mortality.

No song of mine could laud thee half enough
For all thy patience and thy calm repose;
Conceding life thou had'st not wearied of,
And yielding joys that future years enclose.

Such tenderness as marked thy victory,
Such sweet compassion: and my praise, unsaid,
Stands awed before thee, who so smilingly
Set sail toward the Regions of the Dead.

AMBER EYES

TO MY CAT

Your eyes are like two amber beads,
And there are dark spots upon them,
Like the spots upon the sun.

And they flash with anger when I mock you,
And become scornful when I laugh at you—
Those amber eyes of yours.

But when I am unhappy—
When I feel the burden of living too heavy for
my shoulders—
It is then that your passionate eyes
Become wells of tenderness.

FOAM FLOWERS

FOR ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

O, I have read my Swinburne
Since I was seventeen,
And wept for poor Dolores,
And wondered at Faustine;
And little Fragoletta
Has found my pillow wet,
And all the heartstrings in me
Have wrung for Juliette.

While others strew your roses,
Your laurel, or your rue
Upon the mound that covers
All that remains of you,
Springtime shall tell the swallow
To sing it through the year—
That I have gathered Foam Flowers
To scatter on your bier!

LA REINE BLANCHE

(MARY STUART)

Thy peerless perfectness and lovely grace
That won all Europe's praise, has followed thee
Into all ages. Thy fair reality
Was a fit setting for thy fairer face:
Men worshipped not a mythical ideal,
But the true woman whom we still adore—
Whose every glance made passion's pulses soar,
Whose acts of kindness proved her mercies real—
And on the scaffold, Châstelar turned to bless
The perfect woman in her loveliness.

HENRY THE EIGHTH

Your taint shall rest on England through the years,
O royal Bluebeard, whom no men extol!
Yet they who censure, do they know that when
You slew a body, you set free a soul?

DON PEDRO OF CASTILE

(From the statue in the Convent of the Nuns of
San Domingo at Madrid)

O raven locks and eyes of midnight hue
That haunt me with their look of fierce despair,
What are you doing in the convent there
Surrounded by such faithful nuns, and true?
To lessen feudal anarchy, your aim.
Sevillian, reared 'neath Andalusian sun,
Slain by your brother, surely there was one
Who loved you for yourself—tell me her name!
And through the gathering dusk I seemed to hear
“Maria de Padilla” whispered clear.

TO———

Just at the back of your neck was a spot where the
dark hair curled,
And your smile was like morning skies when the sun
is shining through;
(Did you fall at the Marne, I wonder, and lie in a
crumpled heap,
While the guns grew fainter and fainter, as you
silently waited for Death?)

Dark were your lashes, and long, and your eyes were
the blue of the ocean,
And your mouth was a foam-flower fair, kissed by the
light of the sun;
(Were you broken and bruised and bleeding, when
they lifted you out of the trenches
And hurried you off on a stretcher, to the hospital,
racing with Death?)

Just at the back of your neck was a spot where the
dark hair curled;
(Is it clotted with blood, I wonder, as you lie in a
nameless grave?)
Dark were your lashes, and long, and your eyes were
the blue of the ocean;
(Are they closed in a slumber eternal, or staring for-
ever in Death?)

Y S A Y E

Then you began to play, and caught my soul
Up in your playing;
The futile, fragile things that I was saying,
The phantom thoughts that crowd my brain for
 birth,
Were born away beyond the sea and earth;
And all at once I felt the mystic whole
Of love, and life, and death, blow through my hair.
I could not speak—nor think—nor move away:
Spellbound, my hungry senses drank your lay
——And then you stopped—and left me wonder-
 ing there.

TRIBUTE

FOR C. R. T.

I think of you as one who goes her way
With gentle understanding—one whose heart
Is filled with love, and with love's counterpart
Of sweet compassion; one who always sees
Beyond the surface of those mysteries
That idle women prattle of in play.

I think of you as one who has known grief,
And pain and tribulation—one whose smile
Has shed its rays of comfort all the while
Her heart was breaking; one whose motherhood
Was of such special sweetness that it stood
In contradiction to all unbelief.

I think of you as one, all else above,
Who loved her brother with a mother's love.

PART IV.

IN MEMORIAM

*“Chase not too close the fading rapture. Leave
To Love his long auroras, slowly seen.
Be ready to release as to receive.
Deem those the nearest, soul to soul, between
Whose lips yet lingers reverence on a sigh.
Judge what thy sense can reach not, most thine own,
If once thy soul hath seized it. The unknown
Is life to love, religion, poetry.”*

I.

When you were laid to rest, the ground was white
As your belovèd head, and a strange hush
Had fallen with the snow on every bush
And tree that grew around. The sky had caught
The color of your eyes. The air was fraught
With crystal clearness, breathing of the Light.

You should have died in some great storm at sea
That drew its power from the elements,
And thundered with majestic eloquence
Of your dear passing. Or you should have died
Upon the summits, where a mountainside
Had reared its head into Infinity.

But as a little child you went to sleep,
Alone and unafraid, your tryst to keep.

II.

The wage of sin is Life, it is not Death;
And you were not condemned to stay on earth
Those threescore years and ten for your re-birth.
The wage of sin is Life, and I who live
Have learned to understand and to forgive
That God leaned down and kissed away your breath.

In some far higher consciousness divine
I know you have found peace. That all your pain
Was but a prelude to that higher plane
I too shall reach. And you will welcome me
With your old smile, and your old gaiety.
Time will not take away what once was mine.

For love is love, no matter what it brings,
And through my tears it is my heart that sings.

III.

Last night I saw you by the garden gate
And would have called to you that it was late,
But I remembered, ere the words were said,
That you were dead.

To-day, when larks were soaring on the wing,
I heard you call me with the breath of Spring,
And turned to find you walking by my side,
Though you have died.

To-morrow, when the dawn with crimson hue
Shall come to rob me of my dreams and you,
I shall have left my bed, and gone to meet
Your noiseless feet.

IV.

Spring has come back again,
Playing her part
Of scattering flowers
To mock the heart.

Spring has come back again;
April is here,
With her tears and laughter,
Like last year.

Spring has come back again,
Winter has died,
And the snow has melted,
Satisfied.

V.

I have had love such as few women know;
I have known grief, the heritage of love,
And futile tears that blinded with their flow
The sanctity of sorrow, born thereof.

The scar that runs across my heart is deep
And hurt me in the making. It will last
Until that hour when I, too, fall asleep
And consciousness and memory are past.

So now I go my way un murmuring,
Immune to Life, to all her joy and pain;
Immune to all the flowers of the Spring
And all the perfume of a Summer rain.

VI.

Out of your love, you built for me
A shining tower of ivory.

Out of my heart, I wove for you
A banner as blue as the sea is blue.

Out of your heart, you spun for me
Romance and love and mystery.

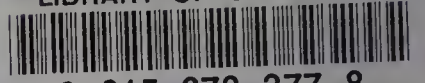
Out of my love, I weep for you
Tears that are tinged with a rainbow hue,

For over the towers that tower o'er me
There towers your tower of ivory.

*I have sung all my songs,
Shed all my tears for you alone.
To you belongs
The fruit of all my pain:
Time will not alter love, nor make me think
It was in vain.*

*When I am dead at last—
Free of the world and all its suffering—
And I have passed
Into the clouds above;
Then I shall try to learn to look at life
With eyes of love.*

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